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C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001652

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [CY](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR DISCUSSES GME, CYPRUS WITH TURKEY'S NSC

(U) Classified by Ambassador Eric S. Edelman, reasons 1.4 b and d.

1. (C) Summary: Turkish NSC SecGen Sariisik welcomed hearing more about the Greater Middle East Initiative when the Ambassador called on him March 17. Sariisik and his deputy, LTG Uzun, had questions about the GME and the role the USG envisages for Turkey. They were careful in underscoring the need to avoid characterizing Turkey as a Muslim or Islamic state (which it is not), instead of as a secular democracy with a predominantly moderate Muslim population that it is. On Cyprus, the Ambassador underscored the helpful role of the NSC in building a consensus in Ankara that has allowed the process to move forward. End summary.

Greater Middle East

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2. (C) The Ambassador called on Turkish NSC Secretary General GEN Sukru Sariisik and his deputy, LTG Hayrettin Uzun, on March 17 to discuss the Greater Middle East Initiative. He began his presentation by taking on some of the popular misconceptions about the initiative: it is not an effort to control the Middle East or energy resources; it is not a conspiracy to promote a "greater Israel" as some in the Islamist press claim; it is not a master plan of reforms to be imposed on the region; and, the USG was not losing interest in the initiative because of some regional leaders' unfavorable reactions. He then went on to explain the initiative, harkening back to the President's public statements as well as PM Erdogan's January visit and discussions in Washington on the GME. Throughout his presentation, he emphasized that the initiative was to promote indigenous forces for reform, not impose them, and that it is primarily focused on political, economic and social reform, although there is a security element which will be highlighted at the June Istanbul NATO Summit.

3. (C) Sariisik thanked the Ambassador, noting that the US needed to make more efforts to explain the initiative to win over world public opinion. He thought most people in the region would support it if it were presented as the Ambassador had. Uzun encouraged the Ambassador and his staff to cast a wide net when addressing Turkish civil society on this issue. He warned that it would be important for Embassy officers to maintain the distinction between Islam, which is a character of Turkish people, and Turkey's secular, democratic and law-based state. Otherwise, people might take GME as undermining the secular structure of Turkey.

4. (C) Sariisik and Uzun posed some questions:

-- What role should Turkey play in GME? Answer: Turkey must decide what role it will play. Turkey is proof that nothing prevents Muslims from being democrats. Turkey's entry into the EU would show the region that if you reform, you will be accepted into the international community.

-- Will the GME and the resulting developments--both positive and negative--in the region require a restructuring of forces by NATO and its members? Answer: Transformation is already a priority for the alliance as it faces new threats from terrorism and WMD. The Alliance will need to ensure it has the capability to respond to contingencies both in Europe and out-of-theater.

-- Can the different approaches of the EU and the US toward the Middle East be bridged? Answer: The Ambassador acknowledged that the EU was facing several challenges with enlargement over its self identity and system of governance. The US-EU Summit will seek to harmonize approaches toward the GME region.

Cyprus

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15. (C) The Ambassador expressed appreciation for the NSC's role in forging the consensus in Ankara that allowed the Cyprus negotiations to move forward. This is the best possibility for a just and lasting solution that has existed in a long time. The professionalism of the Turkish side has been excellent, he observed. Sariisik noted that Turkey also valued this opportunity.

EDELMAN